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CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE

OF

REFORM AND PROGRESS.

Quebec, 27th november 1847.

SIR,

I have the honor, by order of the *Constitutional Committee of Reform and Progress*, to transmit to you herewith the MANIFESTO which it has addressed to the People of Canada, conformably to the Resolutions adopted at the general meeting of the Inhabitants of the city and county of Quebec, held in the Parliament House on the 29th July last.

The Committee were of opinion that the important trust confided to them would be best accomplished by taking a brief retrospective view of the political history of the country since the passing of the imperial act reuniting the two Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. The perusal of this document will present to your view a few of the many grievances under which the country labours, and will doubtless induce the conviction that every Inhabitant of this Province who has the least respect for himself, and who is desirous of procuring for himself and children the enjoyment of those free institutions which are the birthright of every british subject, is bound to exert himself to the utmost for the general good, by the faithful discharge of the duties with which the constitution has entrusted him, and by using the influence which his education and station in society may afford him, to procure the co-operation of his fellow countrymen in every measure designed for their welfare.

In the critical conjuncture in which the Province is now placed,—when an administration sinking under the weight of universal odium, is about to appeal to public opinion for its sentence, the Association, relying upon your known patriotism and zeal, respectfully solicits your assistance in arousing the attention of your friends and fellow parishioners to the deepfelt dissatisfaction expressed by the country at the existing state of things, in pointing out such measures of reform as are deemed indispensable, and in explaining to them the course which the Committee has deemed to be the most advisable under existing circumstances, and the best calculated to secure to this flourishing Province the permanent enjoyment of a constitution modelled upon that of the mother country.

You will observe by the MANIFESTO that the Association recommends to all those who are anxious for the general welfare, and who are disposed to contribute to it, to organize themselves into an extensive and powerful association of which the advantages must be obvious on the eve of a general election, when it is the bounden duty of all the parishes and counties, and indeed of the whole country, to avoid all those subjects of dissention which only tend to weaken our cause and strengthen that of our opponents.

The Association begs therefore that you will communicate with the most influential and zealous persons f your parish for the purpose of calling an immediate meeting of all the electors. You will be pleased to urge upon them the necessity of organization, and to explain the objects in contemplation and the number of officers to be elected, namely : a

PRESIDENT,
VICE-PRESIDENT,
TREASURER,
SECRETARY,
AND A PARISH COMMITTEE,

to be composed of twenty individuals, besides officers, with whom you may afterwards associate such as are desirous of co-operating with you, subject to such rules and regulations as you may think proper to adopt, and whereof the Quebec Committee will send you a draft as soon as your organization is complete in the principal parishes of the county, and after you have appointed the officers of the County Council as suggested by the MANIFESTO, namely : a

PRESIDENT,
TWO VICE-PRESIDENTS,
A RECORDING SECRETARY,
A CORRESPONDING SECRETARY,
AND A GENERAL TREASURER.

As time presses, and the country may be taken by surprise from day to day by a dissolution of Parliament, it would be advisable to postpone all subjects of a local nature to a future occasion, in order to devote our immediate and sole attention to the general election which may soon take place. Consequently, the officers

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of the County Council, and the Presidents and Officers of the Parish Committees, must consult together and call a county meeting in order to enable the electors to agree upon the nomination of a candidate of approved political principles, and thereby avoid, if possible, those injurious contests which occasionally occur between men of the same political party.

The Quebec Committee will always be ready to afford you the assistance of its counsel on every occasion upon which you may think proper to require it.

It will be the duty of all persons of influence to impress upon the electors at all county and parish meetings, that the general interest requires that every individual should be ready to vote upon the shortest notice, and that it is of the utmost importance to show that those who claim the right of the elective franchise can exercise that right freely and independenly.

As the system of responsible or constitutional government, conceded by the mother country to her colonies, is essentially based upon the expression of the wishes of the people by their representatives in Parliament, it is indispensable that those representatives should be chosen by the entire body of the electors, and not by a small number. Every man who looks on with indifference, and who witholds the aid of his voice from his more zealous fellow countrymen in their devotion to the public welfare, forfeits the right to complain of abuses, in as much as he declines to assist in correcting them. In a free and enlightened country the elective franchise is more than a mere abstract *right:* every true lover of his country must regard it as an *imperative duty.* The man who from timidity, indifference or selfishness, hesitates to vote for the representative of his choice, is a bad subject who not only does not fulfil his duty, but who must be looked upon as a useless and even a dangerous person. He sacrifices the public interest and that of his children to motives of private interests. He is in truth but the tool of men in power, who can deceive, intimidate or corrupt him.

Before giving a pledge to support any candidate, it is essential that his political principles should be well known, and that you should be satisfied that he will vote openly and independently in favour of ELECTORAL REFORM, and for the PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN BY THE RESOLUTIONS OF 1841, and consequently that he will oppose the members of the present administration who on all occasions make a profession of these principles, while it is obvious from their private conduct that their only aim is to nullify the boon which the mother country has been pleased to grant to the colony. You will be particularly on your guard against all ambiguous declarations which would enable a candidate to vote in the House in opposition to the wishes of his constituents, and by means of which he might insidiously obtain their confidence and afterwards betray them. The characterless administration which now retains the reins of government is too much attached to the power which gives them a license to dispose of the public monies raised upon the industry of the people, for the benefit of themselves and partisans, not to employ all the means within their reach to influence the electors and the candidates as well during the elections, as before and after them, in order to augment that semblance of a majority which now governs the country without at all representing it. It is only therefore by the most perfect unanimity among all the members of the liberal party, and by the most indefatigable exertions, that it will be possible to counteract the schemes of every description which will be resorted to by the enemies of the people in order to produce schism and discord.

The Quebec Committee, on behalf of the whole country, earnestly solicits your active cooperation and that of your friends, in bringing to a successful issue the noble task which it has undertaken, but which cannot be accomplished without the zealous assistance of the enlightened portion of the population in the country parts.

The Committee begs that you will undertake the patriotic task which it takes the liberty of assigning to you, and that upon the receipt of this letter with the accompanying documents, you will immediately commence the work of organization, in communication with such of your fellow parishioners as are zealous in the cause, and that you will consult together upon the best means of forming an Association upon the plan recommended by the MANIFESTO, and of which it points out the advantages.

As soon as your parish and county Committees are formed, communications must be opened and kept up with the Quebec Association through the regular channel of its Secretaries, after which fresh instructions will be transmitted to you according to circumstances.

The original Association at Quebec has deemed it advisable to assume the initiative, not for the purpose of imposing its views, or its choice of men, upon the different sections of the country, but solely with a view of obtaining unity of action, uniformity of principle and a good understanding among all members of the liberal phalanx, without which the smallest success is unatainable.

Please accept the assurance of my greatest respect and believe me,

Sir,

Your obt. humble servt.,

(Signed) R. E. CARON,

President.

Certified,

N. AUBIN,

Recording Secretary.

N. B.—Letters intended for the Constitutional Committee of Reform and Progress are to be addressed to Mr. N. Aubin, Recording Secretary, *Canadian Newspaper Office.*

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